



Studio of Andrew B. Spang

Getting the Best Out of Your Private Teacher

*Based on a handout by Elaine Douvas,
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You deserve to have your teacher's best effort--his/her undivided attention for 1 hour per week; your progress and well-being should be the most important thing in the world for the 30 minutes or 1 hour that you are there. Unfortunately, a teacher cannot always give his/her best to each and every student, especially if he/she has many students, but you can be more sure of getting that 100% effort if you always give your own best effort and do not make unnecessary extra work for the teacher. Consider the following:

1. Come on time: late arrival shows avoidance.
2. Help your teacher to stay organized; if he or she does not keep a notebook of assignments, keep one yourself. At the beginning of the lesson tell everything that you have practiced and hope to cover; remind him/her of what happened at the previous lesson.
3. Keep energy level high: unpack quickly, don't waste time trying out 10 reeds or oiling your valves, do not yawn, do not slump in your seat. If the teacher is out of the room, use the time to warm up. Don't waste the next person's lesson by taking too long to pack up.
4. Keep your teacher on track; don't engage in too much small talk. Try to let him/her know that you have a lot prepared and want to get through it. Even if he/she is tired, he/she will probably respond to someone who comes in crackling.
5. For the teacher-student relationship to be most productive, there must be trust and respect for the assignments given and the material chosen by the teacher. Let your teacher know of upcoming auditions or contests you are interested in. Remind him/her as the date approaches.
6. Take initiative: do 1 or 2 things more than you were assigned.
7. Try to pick up quickly; don't make him or her repeat things (a conductor only says things once.)
8. Don't be boring; a teacher gets bored working on the same thing with the same person week after week. He/she may lose interest or give up.
9. Don't be a "space cadet!" Don't leave belongings behind; it makes for unnecessary phone calls and extra work for the teacher.
10. If you need a recommendation letter, make it as easy as you can: supply a stamped, addressed envelope, the deadline, and adequate advance notice.
11. Keep track of your lesson time and avoid unnecessary phone calls.
12. Plan your recitals when your teacher can come, otherwise he/she may think that you don't value his/her opinion. Notify him/her of other performances he/she may want to hear to be able to help you better.